

## Book Review

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Ricardo García-Mira, David L. Uzzell, J. Eulogia, Real and José Romay, *Housing, Space and Quality of Life*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2005, pp. 175, ISBN 0754642550

People spend most of their working hours in buildings and most of their leisure time at home or close by in the neighborhoods, which justifies studying the role that housing and space play in the quality of life. This book comprises a dialogue between the design disciplines and the social sciences. It contains twelve papers based on presentations made at the 17th International Conference of the International Association for People-Environment Studies (2002, La Coruña, Spain) on the theme of Culture, Quality of Life and Globalization—Problems and Challenges for the New Millennium.

In the first chapter the editors impose some coherence on this collection of research reports and discussions. They bring together the insights of psychologists, architects, designers, and planners on issues of housing, space, sustainability, and multi-culturalism. In doing so, the book offers an analysis of housing, space, and the quality of life but also addresses the implications of intercultural tension for interaction in a multi-cultural space. Presenting case studies from Spain, Turkey, Brazil, the UK, the USA, and Israel, it discusses a broad spectrum of issues. These range from low-cost housing, security, environmental conservation and sustainability, and alternative building techniques to cultural diversity and its impact on housing and urban design. Thus outlined, the scope of the book seems quite promising. However, the book's potential is compromised by the diversity of the topics covered and the varying quality of the individual papers. The wide range of topics, approaches, and theories makes it quite difficult to draw some conclusions at the level of the whole volume. That said, in the introductory chapter the editors do make a good attempt to link all the papers to the central theme and connect them with some theoretical notions.

The perspectives of urban space taken by two different types of users, namely: pedestrians and automobile passengers, are addressed in chapter 2. It demonstrates how the

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modes of transport in cities affect people's knowledge of the urban environment and their perception and use of space. Not surprisingly, children who walk to school prove to have a better spatial awareness of their urban surroundings than those who are driven. The home is a crucial aspect of the study of housing and space. It may express the personality, culture, and lifestyle of the occupant, depending on whether the individual lives alone or shares the unit and owns or rents. But it also depends on one's cultural background.

Chapters 3 and 9 address facets of the home in two different cultures and its relationship to how people evaluate their quality of life and lifestyle in each culture. For the UK (in chapter 9) it proves that younger adults prefer combined kitchen/dining layouts, whereas older adults prefer separate kitchens and dining rooms. The author examines developments in society that influence changes in lifestyle as well as housing and layout preferences but also notes some cultural aspects that would lead to different outcomes if such a study were conducted in different countries. Prior to establishing a sense of home, one decides where to live and in what kind of dwelling. This decision will be based on objective economic constraints as well as subjective social and environmental preferences. The case study in chapter 10 examines these issues in light of student preferences for university accommodation. The researchers discovered that students do not like shared lavatories but do like living close to campus. Chapter 6 is a departure from the rest of the book, as it considers preferences for architectural features; specifically, it assesses preferences for different cladding materials on houses.

Choice in housing is reserved for the wealthy; it is a privilege rarely found in Third World countries. Chapter 5 evaluates a technical aid program in Brazil intended to help 'favela' squatters relocate and self-build their houses in a safer and healthier way while protecting the environment too. This interesting chapter describes the context in which houses are situated, noting how location and setting can affect people's appraisal of the architecture and their quality of life. Chapter 4 examines a large residential area in Istanbul and evaluates the security problems related to the spatial (e.g., configuration, inner or outer location) and social (e.g., use, isolation) characteristics of the urban area. Interestingly, it establishes levels of fear and victimization.

Also chapter 7 discusses quality of life from a neighborhood perspective, drawing on the results of a research project funded by the European Union (NEHOM). It argues that the most appropriate pathway to successful urban management and the sustainable regeneration of disadvantaged neighborhoods is integrated and coordinated action. This is the only paper containing recommendations for policy. It concludes that urban regeneration programs need integrated neighborhood development and architects need better understanding of environmental psychology.

The effects of migration on a small community in Nebraska are analyzed in chapter 8. Migration movements can significantly affect the perception of residential areas, and the subsequent demographic changes may be evaluated differently by newcomers and long-time residents. This is particularly true for small communities, where the absorption of a new population is more problematic and the resources scarce. Chapter 11 approaches the issue from a global and interdisciplinary perspective, considering the way buildings are associated with individuals and groups.

The development of mental representations of the spatial environment is also addressed in chapter 12. On the premise that age is a relevant predictor of spatial knowledge, the author demonstrates how the interaction between children and their environment affects their acquisition and future development of environmental knowledge. Chapter 13, the last one, considers differences in the way people use the home as a reflection of the socio-cultural context, i.e., of how it is integrated with the norms and customs adopted by each

culture. The authors review the theoretical concepts underlying definitions of the home as a territorial space comprising different functional units (e.g., public, family, and private rooms).

This book as a whole could be of interest to scholars and practitioners who want to understand the connections between psychology, sociology, architecture, urban planning, and ecological sciences. Within a multi-cultural framework, it offers some new insights into the effects of housing and space on the quality of life. But the individual chapters might be of particular interest to specialists in the subject matter.